DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 332 883 SO 020 870

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TITLE How Many Countries Are There in the World?
PUB DATE Oct 89
NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the National Council for Geographic Education (Hershey, PA, October 1989).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Foreign Countries; *Geographic Regions; *Geography; Physical Divisions (Geographic); Political Divisions (Geographic); Social Studies; World Affairs
IDENTIFIERS Africa; Asia; Australia; Europe; North America; Oceania; South America; United Nations

ABSTRACT

Because of conflicting interpretations among the most widely used sources, the question of how many countries there are in the world does not have an easy answer. This paper, however, seeks to produce a justifiable, definitive answer (at least for as long as changing political tides allow). By moving from continent to continent, listing generally recognized countries, addressing those land areas whose statuses are controversial, and explaining whether or not inclusion is warranted, the determination is made that as of October 1989 there were 170 countries in the world. Maps and tables used for this study are available. (DB)

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As geographers it would appear that answering the above question would be as easy as eating cheese-cake. On the contrary, if you do not know how many there are, you just cannot look it up! Deblij and Muller (1988), GEOGRAPHY: REGIONS AND CONCEPTS, list only 148. While readily noting that they omitted "micro-states," it should be asked why list Hong Kong--not now a country, never has been, and is not going to be in the near future. They also list Puerto Rico--do they know something that most of us do not? Listing Namibia could be justified. While not listing six micro-states in Europe, six in the West Indies, seven in the Southwest Pacific, they also do not list six in Africa, all members of the United Nations, and usually listed by others. Djbouti and Swaziland are small, but not micro-states. Somalia is not listed and it certainly is not a micro-state.

The Stryker-Post publications (1989), THE WORLD TODAY SERIES, lists 168 nations. Questioned is the listing of Palestine, the Sovereign Military Order of Malta, and Namibia. Stryker-Post has omitted several micro-states in the West Indies. At the extreme high end is ENCYCLOPEDIA BRITANNICA in its 1989 YEARBOOK listing 184 nations--but does not include Monaco, Nauru, or Vatican City. They list several French overseas provinces (Guadaloupe, Mayotte, Reunion, Martinique, New Caledonia, and even "French Guiana" and "French Polynesia"); also such United States' territories as Guam, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands, and Micronesia (but NOT Marshall Islands or Palau); EB lists in addition: Aruba, Faeroe Islands, Hong Kong, Macao, and Namibia.

The British publication, THE USBORNE BOOK OF COUNTRIES OF THE WORLD FACTS (1986) lists a total of 183 nations; while omitting none that are considered nations by this researcher, they list such British territories as Bermuda, Cayman Islands, Falkland Islands, and British Virgin Islands (but not U.S.); also listed are Greenland and Western Sahara. Another widely used American text, WORLD GEOGRAPHY, Getis, Getis, and Fellman (1988) lists 173 nations, omitting five micro-states in Europe and four in the Pacific Ocean--all of which are NOT members of the United Nations. However, Getis, et al, do list such strange places as Gaza (but not the West Bank), East Timor, Hong Kong, Macau, Puerto Rico, the Netherlands Antilles (but not Aruba), Namibia, and five of the French overseas provinces. An examination of the nations listed by the Population Reference Bureau (Washington, DC, 1989), indicates a similar listing plus the United States' Trusteeship Territories in the Pacific as one nation,and Western Sahara. Getis,

et al, credit the PRB, but seem to have dropped these last two--why not drop some of the other non-nation-states?

WORLD BOOK ENCYCLOPEDIA in its latest YEARBOOK (1989) lists 171 nations including Puerto Rico and Namibia. Again Namibia is perhaps in order, now scheduled for independence early in 1990--but what is this about Puerto Rico? WB does not list Vatican City as do not most others--but some do.

One needs to go no further to indicate the problem in answering the question: "How Many Countires are There in the World?" Having been asked this many times during my career as a teacher and as a professor, a serious attempt has been made to come with a justifiable, definite answer.

AFRICA

Let us begin with the second largest continent--Africa--and the one with the most nation-states, or countries. North Africa includes ten (10) nations--1. Egypt, 2. Libya, 3. Tunisia, 4. Algeria, 5. Morocco, 6. Mauritania, 7. Mali, 8. Niger, 9. Chad, and 10. Sudan. Off the coast of Morocco are two groups of islands: Madiera and the Canary Islands, provinces of Portugal and Spain respectively. In addition Morocco seized Western Sahara in 1976. While still on some political maps, Western Sahara has not existed for more than a decade and will not likely ever do so--in spite of military support by Algeria for the Saharan People's Democratic Liberation Army.

Western Africa has become completely free in recent times--currently divided into thirteen nations: 11. Cape Verde, 12. Senegal, 13. Gambia, 14. Guinea-Bissau, 15. Guinea, 16. Sierra Leone, 17. Liberia, 18. Ivory Coast, 19. Burkina Faso, 20. Ghana, 21. Togo, 22. Benin, and 23. Nigeria, all readily recognized by the United Nations and references cited above.

Central Africa includes seven (7) nations: 24. Cameroons, 25. Central Africa, 26. Congo, 27. Gabon, 28. Equatorial Guinea, 29. Sao Tomé & Principe, and 30. Zaïre. Many maps depict Cabinda as a political entity without noting that this former colony, Portuguese Congo, is now a province of Angola, considered a part of Southern Africa.

East Africa contains eight (8) more nations: 31. Rwanda, 32. Burundi, 33. Uganda, 34. Kenya, 35. Ethiopia, 36. Djbouti, 37. Somalia and 38. Tanzania. Once independent Zanzibar (1963-64) united with Tanganyika to to form Tanzania a quarter century ago. There is no notion that this union--rare in the world today--will dissolve into two nations in the near future.

Southern Africa today is no less than nine(9) nations for Africa: 39. Angola, 40. Mozambique, 41. Zambia, 42. Malawi, 43. Zimbabwe, 44. Botswana, 45. Swaziland,

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46. Lesotho, and 47. South Africa. Here change is impending; Namibia (RSA's South-West Africa since 1920) is to gain independence in 1990 after seventy (70) years of control by white South Africans. Within the RSA apartheid government ten (10) black homelands--considered "nations" by RSA--have been established. Four have been granted "independence" by the RSA: Transkei (1977), Bophuthatswana (1977); Venda (1979); and Venda (1981). To date no other country has recognized these new "nations." Hints of impending nationhood have eminated from the RSA for KwaNdebele and KaNgwane during the past few years; KwaZulu has steadfastly refused to accepts its 10 segments of land as a nation knowing that the Zulu population alone exceeds that of all whites in the RSA. The other homelands--Lebowa, Gazunkulu, and Qua Qua have maintained a low profile. None of these 10 homelands is considered a nation by the United Nations or its members other than the RSA. At some time in the future, the entire RSA will probably be known as Azania--just as surely as Rhodesia became Zimbabwe.

South-West Indian Ocean island nations associated with Africa are four (4); 48. Madagascar, 49. Mauritius, 50. Comoro, and 51. Seychelles. Two islands of significance, Réunion and Mayotte, are in association with France and are expected to remain that way.

Thus we find in October, 1989, a total of 51 nations in or associated with the continent of Africa. Upon independence for Namibia we will note 52.

ASIA

The world's largest continent does not include the most nations--but it does include some of the giants of the World: China, India, and most of the Soviet Union. Southwest Asia, more often known as the Middle East, is a land of many nations where only a few need to be. No less than sixteen (16) are located in this crossroads of the world: 1. Cyprus, 2. Turkey, Syria, 4. Lebanon, 5. Israel, 6. Jordan, 7. Iraq, 8. Iran, 9. Kuwait, 10 Saudi Arabia, 11. Bahrain, 12. Qatar, 13. United Arab Emirates, 14 Oman, 15. South Yeman (PDRY) and 16. North Yemen (YAR). Turkey has assisted the Turkish minority on Cyprus to establish a Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, still supports its existence, but no one else in the world recognizes this entity. Within this region are the Gaza Strip and the West Bank--Arab areas occupied by Israel. While Palestine has been taunted as a new nation (November 15, 1988), these areas will NOT become a part of it until Israel determines that this is as it should be. It is doubtful that Yassir Arafat or the PLO as curently constituted will ever control these areasas part of a nation-state. It is possible--with Israeli aquiesence--but not probable at the present time, or in the near future.

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The five "republics" of Central Asia, annexed more than a century ago by the Czarist regime of Russia, are integral components of the Soviet Union: Kazakh, Kirghiz, Tadzhik, Turkmen, and Uzbek. Rumblings of nationalism are heard from these areas infrequently--as from other Soviet Republics in Eastern Europe and south of the Caucasus Mountains. No "new nations" are impending is this area.

South Asia is basically the Indian-sub-continent of (8) nations: 17. Afghanistan, 18. Pakistan, 19. India, 20. Maldive Islands, 21. Sri Lanka, 22. Nepal, 23. Bhutan, and 24. Bangladesh. While some islands off-shore from India may be independent (Moslem Maldives, Buddhist Sri Lanka) the Hindu Andaman and Nicobar Island groups are firmly a part of the Hindu nation of India. The Tamil minority (Hindu) in Sri Lanka has proposed a nation for itself--Eelam--but not even India is anxious for this to evolve as she assists Sri Lanka to prevent it.

Southeast Asia is an irregular, fragmented, region of ten (10) Asian nations: 25. Myanmar (Burma), 26. Thailand, 27. Laos, 28. Kampuchea, 29. Vietman, 30. Malaysia, 31. Singapore, 32. Indonesia, 33. Brunei, and 34. Philippines. Indonesia wrestled control of Timor from Portugal in 1976 and incorporated all of this island into its domain several years ago.

Northeast Asia (the Far East), includes China and its neighbors, or seven (7) additional nations for Asia: 35. Taiwan (Republic of China), 36. China (People's Republic of China), 37. Mongolia, 38. Soviet Union, 39. North Korea (PDRK), 40. South Korea (ROK), and 41. Japan. Thus one of the major contentions of dispute is herein noted; both the Republic of China (Taiwan) and the People's Republic of China (mainland"red" China) recognize Taiwan as part of China. The question is which one controls the other? While the United Nations (1971), the United States, and most the world recognize the claim of the PRC, several nations still recognize the ROC and others have a close relationsiip with Taiwan while also recognizing the PRC. At some time in the twenty-first century it is expected that Taiwan will cease to be counted as a nation-state. It is also noted that the two remaining colonies in Asia--Hong Kong (Britain) and Macao (Portugal) will revert to Chinese sovereignty in 1997 and 2000 respectively. South of Japan the Ryukyu Islands (Okinawa) were returned to Japan by the United States in 1971 and to the north the Kuril Islands MAY be returned to Japan by the Soviet Union when the Soviets determine just what Japan can best do for them. The island of Sakhalin is expected to remain in Soviet hands.

Thus today Asia is determined to include all or most of 41 nation-states.

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AUSTRALIA/OCEANIA

The Southwest Pacific Ocean includes no less than eleven (11) nations: 1. Australia, 2. New Zealand, 3. Papua-New Guinea, 4. Solomon Islands, 5. Vanuatu, 6. Fiji, 7. Tonga, 8. Western Samoa, 9. Tuvulu, 10. Kiribati, and 11. Nauru. While the United Nations and most of the other nations of the world recognize the first six-listed nations of this area, and Western Samoa, the other four have NOT been so respected. Perhaps some consider the monarchy of Tonga as too "undemocratic," or the size of Tuvulu (nine square miles) too small. Then Kiribati is not recognized for dividing itself from Tuvulu at the time of independence. Nauru is small and getting smaller due to the mining away of the island for phosphates (from 10 to less than 8 square miles today); the 8,000 inhabitants are relatively wealthy and perhaps not too concerned about their status vis-a-vis the rest of the world. Dependencies in this part of the world abound (though not nearly as many as in years past). The United States Trusteeship Territories, taken from Japan (who took them from Germany at the end of World War I) in World War II, are on the verge of independence or unification into the United States in the near future. Three new nations are expected within the next decade: Marshall Islands, Micronesia, and Papau (Belau)--just as soon as they agree to accept U.S. nuclear vessels in their waters; the Northern Marianas (Siapan, Tinian) have recently agreed to join the U.S. as a commonwealth, such as Puerto Rico. Guam (Southern Marianas) has long been a territory of the United States (1898), along with Hawaii (once an independent nation), Midway, Wake, American Samoa, and several other very small intities near or with Kiribati. The French still control French Polynesia (with the Marquessas), New Caledonia, and Wallis & Futuna Islands. Only in New Caledonia have the Kanak people expressed unrest and demanded to be free of French control. The remaining British colony, Pitcairn, is not viable for nationhood. New Zealand's small holdings--Cook Islands, Niue, and Tokelau Islands, are considered parts of New Zealand--though the Cook group is larger than some that are independent. Australia's Christmas Island, Cocos Islands, and Norfolk Island are not viable for statehood, let along nationhood, and Tasmania has been one of the Australian states since Australia became a nation in 1901. Thus the Southwest Pacific Ocean area has 11 nations.

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EUROPE

Europe, the mother of nations, is--without the Soviet Union--the smallest of continents; nevertheless it contains the third largest group of nations. Europe is viewed through four directional regions: Northern, Western, Southern, and Eastern. Northern Europe includes seven (7) nation-states: 1. Iceland, 2. Norway, 3. Sweden, 4. Finland, 5. Denmark, 6. United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and 7. Ireland (Eire). Many larger islands and island groups are integral parts of several European nations. Those associated with this area include Aland (Finland), Gotland (Sweden), Bornholm (Denmark), Svalbard (Norway), Shetland, Orkney, Hebrides, Isle of Man, and the Channel Islands (United Kingdom). Only the Faeroe Islands, a self-governing group in association with Denmark are considered a possible nation, and this is not impending. The integral elements of the United Kingdom--Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland--will remain just this as long as England is determined that they do so.

Western Europe is considered to be France and the German Federal Republic (West Germany) plus a number of their smaller neighbors for a total of eight (8): 8. France, 9. Belgium, 10. Netherlands, 11. Luxembourg, 12. West Germany, 13. Switzerland, 14. Liechtenstein, and 15. Austria. Corsica, a large island in the Mediterreanean, is an integral part of provincial France.

Southern Europe is an area of many nations and an uncertain number. Counting Cyprus and Turkey (both of which were counted in Asia as most of Turkey is in Asia and Cyprus is closer to Asia than to any European state), there are eleven (11): 16. Portugal, 17. Spain, 18. Andorra, 19. Monaco, 20. Italy, 21. San Marino, 22. Vatican City, 23. Malta, 24. Greece and 25. Turkey and 26. Cyprus. Islands associated with and considered integral parts of the nations include: Azores (Portugal), Balearic (Spain), Sardinia and Sicily (Italy), Aegean & Crete (Greece). The British holding of Gibralter, though more than 250 years long, will end when Britain determines it is no longer viable to control the entrance of the Mediterreanean and returns it to Spain for something she feels she needs at the time. Except for Liechtenstein in the Alps, the micro-nations of Southern Europe are those most frequently overlooked: Andorra, Monaco, San Marino, Malta, and Vatican City. All are viable and recognized widely--except for Malta, they are NOT in the United Nations. It was determined by this researcher not to count as a nation the few acres given to the Sovereign Military Order of Malta in Rome.

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Eastern Europe is the Communist world of the Soviet Union and her neighbors, Some ultra-conservatives do not view the satellites as nations; however, counting the Soviet Union, there are nine independent nation-states in this area: 26. Bulgaria, 27. Albania, 28. Yugoslavia, 29. Romania, 30. Hungary, 31. Czechoslovakia, 32. East Germany, 33. Poland, and 34. the Soviet Union. While there are current noises about the unification of the two Germanies, there are many kinks to be worked out for such an event. It will happen before the 21st century. At that time there will not only be one less nation, but one less Communist nation in the world. While any of the listed nations above could become non-Communist, glasnost and peristroika notwithstanding, the various republics of the Soviet Union are NOT expected to become nations in the near future: the Baltic Republics of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania hunger for independence, and the United States has recognized their legations in Washington since USSR seizure in 1940. There is even less chance that other Soviet Republics in Europe--Byelorussia, Moldavia, and Ukraine will ever again be free nations. The Trans-Caucasian Republics--Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia--are in the same status. Why does the United Nations recognize Ukraine and Byelorussia as equal members? At the end of World War II, the Nazis had inflicted about 20,000,000 terminal casualties on the Soviet Union. No less than nine million of these were Ukrainians, and perhaps as many as 6 million were White Russians (Byelorussia). Thus the Soviet Union demanded and received this consideration for the sufferings of these republics in W.W.II. It was agreed to by the U.S., U.K., France, and China that they be charter members of the United Nations.

Thus there are 32 nations in Europe--not counting the Soviet Union, Turkey, and Cyprus, which were counted as Asian nations.

NORTH AMERICA

On the surface this would appear to be one of the easier continents to study with regard to nations. Not so! By counting the West indies as part of North America, where there are no less than thirteen nations, we have several identity problems. Identifying the nations of the mainland, ten (10) are evident: 1. Canada, 2. United States, 3. Mexico, 4. Belize,5. Guatemala, 6. Honduras, 7. El Salvador, 8. Nicaragua, 9. Costa Rica, and 10. Panama. No one disputes that Alaska on the mainland of North America is part of the United States--but the Soviet Union probably thinks about this on occasion. On the North American mainland Guatemala claims Belize as a province--but it will remain an independent nation as long as there is a United Kingdom which guaranteed the viability of Belize upon independence in 1981. To the north, Greenland, a self-governing

area under Danish soverignty has indicated some desire for independence, but this is not likely under the present structure of NATO and the interest of the United States for close control of the area.

The West Indies includes both the Greater and Lesser Antilles. Most of the Greater Antilles have been independent for several decades; however the independent Lesser Antilles were freed by Britain only in recent years. Thirteen (13) nations are noted in this small area of the world: 1. Bahamas, 2. Cuba, 3. Haiti, 4. Dominican Republic, 5. Jamaica, 6. St. Kitts-Nevis, 7. Antigua-Barbuda, 8. Dominica, 9. St. Lucia, 10. St. Vincent, 11. Barbados, 12. Grenada, and 13. Trinidad and Tobago. Other islands in the West Indies are considered dependencies: Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands (United States); British Virgin Islands, Anguilla, Cayman Islands, Montserrat, and Turks and Caicos Islands (U.K.); Guadaloupe and Martinique (France); Aruba and the other Netherlands Antilles. The most viable possibilities, excepting Puerto Rico, are the two French departments--but they seem to be content as provinces of France. The British areas are just too small (but other British areas have previously been considered as too small!!!) The United States will not free either Puerto Rico or the U.S. Virgin Islands in the near future--but either freedom or statehood for Puerto Rico is not an impossibility given the right circumstances. The most likely candidates for nationhood are the Dutch areas--especially Aruba, and possibly Curacao and Bonaire. Thus at the present time there are 23 nation-states associated with North America.

SOUTH AMERICA

South America includes twelve (12) recognized nations: 1. Brazil, 2. Suriname, 3. Guyana, 4. Venezuela, 5. Colombia, 6. Ecuador, 7. Peru, 8. Bolivia, 9. Paraguay, 10. Uruguay, 11. Argentina, and 12. Chile. French Guiana remains one of the largest "colonies" on earth--and on a continental mainland. Economically it is dependent upon France (with as much as 67% unemployment in recent years), and would not be viable if granted independence. (It should be noted that this very fact did not stop several other nation-states from seeking and gaining independence). Islands off the coast of South America are few; the Galapagos are integral parts of Ecuador; the Falklands and their dependencies, are firmly in the hands of the British--with an occupying military force (4,000) twice the size of the settler population. Argentina's dream of a Malvinas Islands province seems to have been permanently shattered.

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RECAPITULATION

Continent/Region	No. Nations
Africa & nearby islands	51
Asia & associated islands	41
Australia & Southwest Pacific	11
Europe--ex. USSR, Turkey, Cyprus	32
North America w/West Indies	23
South America	12
	170

The Missing Thirteen (from U.N.)

Europe - Andorra
Liechtenstein
Monaco
San Marino
Switzerland
Vatican City

Asia - Korea, North
Korea, South
Taiwan (ROC)

Pacific - Kiribati
Nauru
Tonga
Tuvulu

Reconcilation with United Nations (1989)

Total Nations in United Nations	159
Diff. from total determined (170)	11
+ Byelorussia and Ukraine	2
	157 (or 13 less, as noted above)

On the basis of this study the ten (10) most likely new nations are expected to be:

1. Namibia (1990)
2. Marshall Islands
3. Micronesia
4. Palau (Belau)
5. Palestine
6. New Caledonia
7. Aruba
8. Greenland
9. Faeroe Islands
10. Curacao and Bonaire (Neth. Antilles)

A series of maps/tables are available for this study noting the status of the 170 nation-states of the world as of October, 1989. Readers may write for these data to keep up with the world as new nations are created--and as other nations are united--in the coming years.

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